DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 327 913 EA 022 417

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TITLE A Regional On-Site Administrator Preparation Program.
PUB DATE Apr 90
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the International Intervisitation Programme, "Towards 2000--Preparing Educational Managers," (Manchester, England, April 22-28, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Education; Certification; *College School Cooperation; Degree Requirements; *Educational Certificates; Elementary Secondary Education; Graduate Study; Higher Education; *Internship Programs; Management Development; *Principals; Professional Education; Program Guides
IDENTIFIERS *Virginia

ABSTRACT

A restructured administrator preparation program, the Regional Principal Preparation Program, is described in this report. The program is characterized by university/school cooperation, onsite delivery, job-relevant curriculum, full-time internships, mentorships, adequate candidate assessment, individualized educational programming, and followup support. Program evaluation is forthcoming. (LMI)

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A REGIONAL ON-SITE ADMINISTRATOR PREPARATION PROGRAM

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TOWARDS 2000 - PREPARING EDUCATIONAL MANAGERS

International Intervisitation Programme 1990
Manchester, England
April 22-28, 1990

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Introduction

During the past decade, educators in the United States have been confronted with a great number of reports on education, most of which have been critical of what is being done in the public schools. Among those reports have been some that have been also critical of the manner in which educational administrators are prepared by the colleges and universities. It has not been a secret that the best the institutions of higher education can do to prepare administrators is to involve prospective candidates in a series of course work which is state certification mandated, but which may or may not be relevant to the job to which they aspire. This is to say that the vast majority of administrator preparation programs simply give a person a license to obtain a job; the programs do not really prepare them for the challenges and problems they will face in that position.

Reform Background

The reports on the condition of education in the United States that were issued during the decade of the 1980's impacted heavily upon the method of preparing educational administrators by citing the inadequate training these professionals were receiving at the colleges and universities. The University Council on Educational Administration issued a report on the status of programs for training administrators in the United States, and stated that present programs were characterized by:

> Lack of a definition of good educational leadership.
> Lack of leader recruitment programs in the schools.
> Lack of collaboration between school districts and Universities.
> Lack of minorities/women in the field.
> Lack of systematic professional development for school administrators.
> Lack of quality candidates for preparation programs.
> Lack of preparation programs relevant to the job demands.
> Lack of sequence, content and clinical experiences in preparation programs.
> Lack of a licensure system which promotes excellence.
> Lack of a national sense of cooperation in preparing leaders. (1987)

This rather dismal assessment of the existing programs is, however, accurate without exaggeration. But in all honesty, the present state of preparation programs is not a result of indolence or lack of caring, but rather a result of not keeping up with the times. All programs reflect the certification requirements of the respective states and these requirements were set sometimes as much as twenty years ago. The school organizations have changed

considerably in that period of time as have the problems administrators face in the schools. This is simply a matter of the certification requirements not keeping step with the changing conditions of the schools, and, as a result, the preparation programs reflect the out-dated certification requirements, not the present conditions.

Restructuring of Preparation Programs

In keeping with the demands for reform of the programs that prepare educational administrators, many states initiated efforts to restructure those programs. Most efforts attempted to incorporate the more recent research findings on preparation that have been generated from such sources as the research on effective schooling and national reports on leadership training, such as: Leaders for America's Schools, A Progress Report and Recommendations on Educational Improvement in the SREB States and Preparing Virginia School Administrators: An Analysis of Policy Options.

Components of a Restructured Program

Most efforts to restructure the administrator preparation program suggest certain components should be in existence to meet all of the demands of a program that will prepare administrators for the schools of the future. Some of the more salient components are: a cooperative effort between the local school system and university staff, the program administered off-campus and located within the local school system, revision of the existing course work to make it more relevant to the job, a full-time internship, use of a mentor, adequate assessment of candidates, individualization of the educational program and follow-up support. These components make up the program in the Regional Principal Preparation Program.

Cooperative Effort

The certification regulations promulgated in Virginia mandate that the university staff work cooperatively with the personnel in the local school system to develop the entire program. This means that considerable planning effort must take place to deal with all of the issues and aspects of the program. A committee is composed of representatives of the university and interested local school systems to provide the governance and guidance for the project. This committee serves as a steering group to make the decisions regarding all phases of work. The method of identifying, selecting and admitting students is cooperatively decided by the steering committee, for instance. The procedure must account for university regulations regarding admission of students and also for local school system concerns and personnel needs. Likewise, the content and experiences that comprise the program must be jointly decided.

This is based upon both the knowledge base of administration which the university staff can bring and what the local school system believes a school administrator does while on the job. These two sources then determine the content of the course work. The actual teaching of the course work still remains primarily with the university teaching staff because of the course credit and degree requirements, but is greatly augmented by local school system personnel who serve as adjunct professors. This effort becomes a team teaching arrangement between the two groups who share responsibility for the instructional program. The cooperative effort continues in making decisions regarding the places where the internship will be held, who will be responsible and what kinds of experiences the students will have. Finally, the method of assessment of the students is also decided upon by the steering committee. This group solves problems that may arise during the course of the program and becomes the governing body.

Off-Campus/On-Site Program Delivery

One of the major shifts in program orientation in the restructured program is the aspect of delivering all course work at the local school system site rather than on the campus of the university. This geographical shift is more than just a physical move, for it represents a shift in emphasis from a research based degree to a practitioner degree. Although this shift may appear subtle, it is of major importance to the contributing organizational bodies. This plan takes the professor away from the university confines and into the scene where the student will perform as an administrator. This is significant and it also reinforces the cooperative nature of the entire program. If the program were conducted on campus, it would necessitate all school personnel and students to go to that location and would not represent much of a change in either orientation or substance. In addition, the local school setting can serve as a laboratory in which students can practice the art and science of educational administration, and professors can be involved as contributors to that laboratory experience. The setting also serves as a place where university staff can obtain some in-service about the administration of the school building from the practical point of view. This setting also provides for a better tie-in with the experiences of the internship.

Recruitment of Students

Under the old program of principal preparation, students made the decision to apply for the program in as much as they were the ones who would pay for it through tuition payments. It was a market driven program, based upon the free enterprise of each student. In addition, most programs were the basis of an economic model designed to support doctoral programs in educational administration. Because of this, universities enrolled large

numbers of students in the certification level courses to generate funds to support other parts of the institution's degree programs. Entrance requirements for such programs were usually minimal to enable large numbers of students to enroll.

Under the restructured preparation programs, recruitment of students is more structured, systematic and quality driven. There are still sufficient means for all students to either be nominated by their peers or superiors or for self nomination to occur. All personnel in the local participating school systems are notified of the possibilities for nomination and are given forms to complete either for themselves or others. It is important that a large pool of applicants be secured in order for the best candidates to surface. Minorities of all types are encouraged to apply. The self nomination process encourages minority persons to apply, but, in addition, notices are sent out specifically requesting such nominations. In some cases, minorities are identified by former graduates of the university who are contacted for names of possible candidates. A positive recruitment program is necessary for not only meeting the demands for equal employment opportunity directives, but also to obtain superior candidates who will reflect the population to be served.

Course Work Relevant to the Job

The course work taken by a student under the previous certification programs does not reflect the changes in society and the schools that have taken place over the past ten years. Under most programs, the certification component consisted of a certain number of courses that were not related to each other nor to the local school building organization. Courses such as school finance which dealt with the theory of financing public schools were included in the certification requirements. The contents of this course, although relevant to higher level course work, is not the kind of knowledge a principal of a school building needs to secure and allocate resources to a program. In the restructured programs, the content to be studied by the prospective administrators must relate directly to the job expected of principals. Selection of the content may seem like an easy task, but first of all there has to be agreement by both university staff and local school system personnel on what a principal does. When that is determined, relevant knowledge, skills and even attitudes that are used on the job can be identified. This is not a replication of what the principal does presently on the job, but rather what the principal of the future may need in these areas.

In the Regional Program for the Preparation of Principals, the school building principal was defined as one who is primarily a creator and implementor of educational programs for students at the building level. The principal leads a group of educators within the constraints of a larger system but endeavors to enlarge those

constraints. The person is an educational scholar, leader and manager who knows that schools exist to produce individual learning.

As the school executive, the principal must be a learner at all times. The person must have a broad knowledge of disciplines and be exposed to the philosophical bases of education. The principal must study the theory and research on learning. The successful person must have a comprehensive knowledge of how students learn.

The principal is a visionary leader who possesses good human relations skills. The person must possess vision for the organization, and this is gained by a thorough understanding of the goals of education, theories of learning, family life and development, curriculum, governance and technology of education. The vision is then communicated to teachers, parents, central administration and the community at large. The principal empowers these people to implement the program of the school. The thrust is one of high expectations, and, at the same time, the person has the confidence to be an informed risk taker who permits and accepts change.

In addition to scholarship and leadership, the prospective principal must possess good management skills essential to the efficient operation of the school building. These skills are used by the principal to allocate the resources of the organization to accomplish set goals in an effective and efficient manner.

In order to assist a prospective principal to gain the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to perform at a high level of effectiveness in accordance with the above definition, the curriculum and other instructional activities of the program must provide experiences to gain them. Certain skills, knowledge and attitudes will be gained through the experiences of the internship while others will be gained through both formal instructional activities and individual experiences. The curriculum designed for this program accommodates all three instructional thrusts.

The curriculum will be delivered over twenty-four months. The content and time requirements in clock hours and semester credits follow:

	Minimum Clock Hours	Semester Hours
Experiential Activities	600	12
Formal Instruction	360	24
Individual Study	360	--
Total Hours Expected	1320	36

The experiential activities will be covered through the fulltime internship each candidate will have.

Direct instruction on foundations of education, theories and practices in education and administration and related studies will be provided in the formal instructional component of the program. The specific areas of instruction will be:

	Minimum Clock Hours	Semester Hours
Leadership/Administration	120	8
Child Development	60	4
Programs/Curriculum Development	60	4
Instruction/Learning Supervision	60	4
Nature of Education	30	2
Liberal Arts Studies	30	2
Total Formal Instruction	360	24

The specific content of each of the broad areas of formal instruction have yet to be determined; however, the content will be derived from the definition of what a principal does as outlined above. The subject matter content of the program will, however, be couched within the framework of university courses to comply with the degree requirements of that institution. The course timetable for the program is as follows:

	1989-90	1990-91
Fall	EDAE 6914 Problems: The Principalship - Leadership Skills	EDAE 5604 Seminar: Legal, Financial and Personnel Issues
Spring	EDAE 6014 Administration of Instructional Programs & Support Services	EDAE 5054 Administration of Special Needs Programs
	HUM 555 Order & Chaos A Liberal Arts Perspective	EDCI 6914 Problems: Teaching & Learning in the Curriculum
Summer	EDAE 5614 Internship: Principalship - School Site Leadership I	EDAE 5614 Internship: Principalship - School Site Leadership II
	EDAE 5604 Seminar: The Context of Education	EDRE 5404 Foundations of Educational Research and Evaluation

The total credits accumulated under this plan is 36 semester hours of work. The prospective principals in this program will complete the internship experiences during the school year, but register for the internship credit during the summers to equalize the financial tuition burden of the entire program.

Full-time Internship

A very important component of the restructured principal preparation program is the full-time internship for each prospective principal. Full-time has been defined as being a minimum of 90 days in the school during the two year period. The internship is further defined as being conducted during the time when the school is in session or when a significant activity is being conducted such as an evening meeting of the school board. The internship is objective driven so that the experiences provide direct learning in the operation of the school. The internship is not an opportunity for the prospective principal to follow the principal around looking over the shoulder of the practitioner. The intern is intimately involved in the decision making life of the school organization. The objectives defined for the internship must be completed within the time frame of the program. There are sixty-two objectives that the intern can work to achieve; however, the precise objectives are identified by the intern, mentor, faculty advisor and the advisory committee. The objectives chosen are then identified in the Individual Education Program for each intern. Some common objectives must be met by all interns, but the majority are selected to fit the needs of each individual.

The internship is conceived as an opportunity for the prospective principal to actually administer portions of a school program under the watchful eye of a trained practitioner in much the same way a medical intern practices under the supervision of a fully licensed physician. At the beginning of the internship, the prospective principal will get to know the school organization by examining many documents and sources of information. This will give the person a good knowledge base upon which to base future work. Gradually, the intern will take on more responsibility for certain jobs. The intern will supervise students and teachers in a variety of settings, both formal and informal. The intern will do some classroom observations of teachers and then conduct follow-up conferences with teachers. This will occur after the intern has gained observation skills and knowledge through training by the mentor. The intern will also be assigned responsibility for other segments of the operation of the school. For example, the intern may be assigned the responsibility of organizing and conducting a staff development program for the teachers in the school. The intern could also assume responsibility for developing the annual school improvement plan for the building. These and other significant experiences are the proper format for learning the practical administration of the school and for putting into practice theory that is taught in formal course work.

The 90 day internship can be accomplished in one of two ways. One way would be for the intern to spend 90 consecutive days interning in the school. This would provide for the total immersion of the intern into the life of the school and provide for a sustained effort at administering the school. On the other hand, there are

some experiences that the intern should have that may not fall within the 90 day span of time. For instance, before actually having that full responsibility, prospective principals should experience the opening of school in the fall and the closing of it during the spring. These activities do not fall within a 90 day time frame. In a compressed period of time, there may not be sufficient time to reflect upon experiences they have had and to discuss them in a didactic manner with a mentor, thereby learning the reasons behind certain actions or decisions. For this reason, the Regional Program for the Preparation of Principals decided to spread the 90 days over two years and have the intern spend 45 days each year in the schools. In this manner the intern can have a variety of experiences that cover two years, yet work on some long term projects. The intern can also develop a long-standing learning relationship with the mentor.

In order to obtain a broad understanding of administration in a number of settings, the interns in the Regional Program are required to spend the equivalent of at least six days interning in an organization outside of the field of education. These experiences could be held in a hospital, insurance company, newspaper or government office. The objective in having the interns complete this experience is to help them understand the similarities and differences in administration in non-educational institutions.

Mentorship

Each intern is assigned to a mentor who serves as the first line supervisor of activities while that person is in the school building. The mentor also helps the intern identify and achieve the objectives of the internship and at the same time provide some direct instruction in how to administer organizations. Over the two years, the mentor will provide emotional as well as professional support to the intern during the learning phase of the program and will continue through the follow-up activity.

Mentors are chosen based upon exceptional leadership in the local school system and are approved by the school administration. They are principals who more closely exemplify the definition of a principal stated for this program. These persons are ones who have been rated as superior by those above them in the organization. The principal chosen as a mentor must have shown a good deal of commitment to the program and willingness to serve in the capacity of a mentor.

Advisory Committee

Each prospective principal is assigned an advisory committee composed of the university faculty professor, mentor, and a

representative of the local school system. The university faculty member will serve as the chair of the committee. The role of the Advisory Committee is to develop a close open and caring relationship with the prospective principal. The prospective principal and Committee is viewed as a team working together to maximize the prospective principal's chances of success. The specific responsibilities include:

Assess the participant's entry-level skills, knowledge and attitudes; assist the prospective principal in preparing an Individual Educational Plan (IEP); and approve the plan.

Meet periodically with the participant to evaluate progress of the prospective principal.

Receive feedback from the participant and provide counsel on both personal and professional matters.

Select forty-five days annually that will be used by the participant in an internship or practicum and provide logistics for time away from the work situation of the prospective principal.

Provide a strong network with the central office staff and all components of the local school system.

Assure that the prospective principal receives comprehensive and rich experiences in preparation for success in the position of principal.

Assist the prospective principal in preparing to take an administrative position in the future.

Assist the prospective principal in locating a suitable position after finishing the program.

Provide follow-up assistance when the prospective principal leaves the program.

Each member of the Advisory Committee also has a unique role. The university faculty representative will assure that the prospective principal has an academically sound and acceptable program which includes content in leadership, student development, instruction, curriculum, the nature of education and liberal studies. The local school system representative will establish and coordinate time schedules for the participant. The mentor will serve as the on-site director of field experiences throughout the prospective principal's two-year program. The mentor will also assure that the prospective principal has appropriate on-site experiences in a school building setting.

The Advisory Committee will be responsible for the prospective principal being involved in the following activities in a school setting while serving as an intern:

- Curriculum development.
- Staff development programs.
- Interview, select and assign personnel.
- Preparation and administration of a school budget.
- Supervision of bookkeeping and accounting procedures.
- Development of an annual school improvement plan.
- Coordination of student scheduling and orientation.
- Development of a master schedule.
- Supervision and evaluation of student activity and athletic programs.
- Positive student discipline.
- Preparation of local and state reports.
- Work experiences with other principals, supervisors and administrators within and outside of education that will broaden the person's conception of schooling, its environment and its administration.

Formal meetings of the Advisory Committee are called by the chair, but any member of the committee can request a meeting. These meetings are used for reviewing assessment data, identifying intern experiences, reviewing and improving the Individual Education Plan and evaluating the progress of the prospective principal at the end of each semester.

Development of an Individual Education Plan

Each prospective principal prepared an Individual Education Plan which was presented to the Advisory Committee for review and approval. The contents of the IEP were based upon assessment data derived during the initial sessions of the semester courses. The IEP looks very much like those used in the public schools throughout the United States. Each IEP contains the following information:

1. A summary of assessment data,
2. Courses to be taken each semester,
3. Description of internship or practicum experiences,
4. Extra-curricular activities, and
5. A schedule of dates set for the practicum, courses and other activities.

Although the course work may be the same for each participant in the program, individualization will be accounted for through both the internship experiences or the extra-curricular activities. Identification of these experiences and activities will result from review of assessment data. Appropriate experiences and activities will be prescribed by the Advisory Committee to remedy or

strengthen any area that needs such. The IEP will serve the prospective principal during the two years of the program and will be revised when needed or appropriate.

Assessment of Prospective Principals

One of the more important aspects of the restructured principal preparation program is the reliance upon assessment of all candidates. The assessment is a continuous activity throughout the program beginning with the selection procedure and continuing to the time when the prospective principal exits from the program. A variety of assessment practices and instruments will be used. During the initial sessions of the instructional modules, several instruments were used to give the participants some idea regarding their leadership potential. The following instruments were used at that time: FIRO-B, California Psychological Test, and Myers-Briggs Inventory. The results of these instruments were shared with the participants and discussed with the idea of helping them to evaluate their leadership potential and to identify any areas on which they wished to improve. Assessment also occurs during the formal course work throughout the two year period of study, and this is augmented through the periodic review of the work of the participant by the Advisory Committee. The prospective principal is also assessed by the mentor through the internship experiences.

The final assessment experience will be through the Assessment Center of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. The Southwest Virginia Regional Assessment Center is located on the campus and will be used to assess all of the prospective principals that complete the program. This experience assesses twelve dimensions which are considered essential for success in the position of the principalship. These dimensions are: Problem Analysis, Judgement, Leadership, Organizational Ability, Decisiveness, Sensitiveness, Stress Tolerance, Range of Interests, Personal Motivation, Educational Values, Oral Communication and Written Communication. Assessment experiences in this Center consist of leaderless group activities, in-basket responses, interviews and problem-solving activities all of which contribute to an overall assessment of the candidate. A final report detailing strengths and weaknesses is given to the local school system to use in helping the candidate work on whatever weaknesses were identified through the assessment activities.

On the Job Follow-Up

A formal program of follow-up activities has been formulated to assist the prospective principal to succeed when placed in an administrative position. These activities are designed to provide support, to help in making adjustment to the position, to provide assistance in any particular problem and to give feedback on the

quality of work that is being done. Principals will be visited by the university faculty member as the first line contact between the Advisory Committee and the graduate of the program. The purpose of the visit will be to maintain the bonding that has been set during the program and to provide whatever technical assistance the person might need. Further, the other members of the Advisory Committee--mentor and central office staff member--will conduct supervisory visits where desired and necessary. In fact, the Advisory Committee as a group will provide follow-up activities to the graduate where appropriate.

Graduates of the program will also be brought together as a group to share experiences, to continue the bonding within the group, to identify resources that may be needed by the individual graduates and to extend the knowledge base of the group. Group experiences will be both formal and informal to meet the needs of the individuals. Some of the get-togethers will be of a social nature to further the bonding, whereas other sessions might be formalized enough to have a presentation and discussion of a specific topic. The specific nature of the group sessions will depend to a great extent upon the needs of the graduates, but the mechanism is in place to be used in the manner that will assist the new principal to the greatest extent.

Evaluation

The project that is now underway will be evaluated at the end of the first year and again at the conclusion of the program for this group of individuals. Further, evaluation of the graduates will take place following the end of the first year of their work as an administrator. This evaluation will be conducted jointly with the university faculty and school system personnel. Evaluation of the entire program will be done using external and internal evaluators. University personnel from neighboring institutions of higher education and school system personnel will be used to help conduct the evaluation. Evaluative methodologies and instruments are being developed based upon the goals of the program and the description of the type of principal that was to be trained. This two pronged effort will allow both the process and product of the program to be evaluated. Data derived from these evaluations will serve as the basis for further principal preparation programs that will be developed in other parts of the state.

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